What is claimed is:

1.   A method for collecting information about viewing habits of subscribers

to a media delivery network for delivering programming to numerous set top boxes,

each capable of supporting different applications invoked and controlled by

subscriber commands, the method comprising the steps of:

a)   programming each application to identify selected subscriber

commands of interest;

b)   determining an application identifier corresponding to a particular

application to which a selected command is addressed; and

c)   creating an event record comprising:

(1)   the application identifier;

(2)   an identification code corresponding to the selected

command; and

(3)   a time stamp.

2.   A method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of accessing

a table in order to determine the identification code for the selected command.

3.   A method according to claim 2 further comprising the step of accessing

a table in order to determine the application identifier.

4.   A method according to claim 2 further comprising the steps of repeating steps a through c to collect a plurality of event records and buffering the plurality of event records.

5.   A method according to claim 4 further comprising the step of forwarding the plurality of event records to a merge processor.

6.   A method according to claim 5 further comprising the step of coupling to the merge processor a data source selected from the group consisting of: broadcast identification information, interactive application use information, national advertising information and local advertising information.

7.   The method according to claim 1 in which the selected commands of interest are selected from the group consisting of: channel change commands, volume change commands, VCR commands, application invocation commands and application control commands.

8.   A system for collecting and processing information about subscribers' selection and use of programming distributed over a media delivery network, the system comprising:

a)   a merge processor coupled via means for communication to

b)   a plurality of set top boxes, each comprising a processor for (1) collecting a plurality of event records that describe selected

commands from a subscriber to a particular set top box and (2) transmitting event records to the merge processor;

c)   wherein the merge processor forms an event timeline describing a subscriber's selection of distributed programming for a discrete time period by merging the event records with programming data describing programming available via the media delivery system.

9.   A system according to claim 8 wherein the programming data comprises data collected from at least two sources selected from the group consisting of: a broadcasting schedule source, a national advertising schedule source, a local advertising schedule source and an interactive application use schedule source..

10.   A system according to claim 8 wherein each set top box further comprises a plurality of applications capable of being invoked by a subscriber.

11.   A system according to claim 10 wherein each event record comprises: (1) an application identifier corresponding to the application associated with the recorded event; (2) an event identification code; and (3) a time stamp associated with the initiation of the event.

12.   A system according to claim 11 wherein each application creates an event record upon detection of selected commands from the subscriber.

-43-

13. A system according to claim 8 further comprising a buffer for storing the event records before transmission.

14. A system according to claim 8 wherein the merge processor forms an event timeline for each of the plurality of set top boxes.

15. A system according to claim 14 further comprising an analysis engine for correlating the event timelines with demographics information describing the subscribers.

16. A method for journaling information about subscriber use of a media delivery network for delivering programming and a merge processor for analyzing the resulting journaled information, the method comprising the steps of:

a)   collecting information about a plurality of subscribers' use of a media delivery network, the collecting step comprising:

   i)   identifying commands of interest from each subscriber;

   ii)   forming event records that record at least the commands of interest and a time associated with the command;

b)   transmitting event records to the merge processor;

c)   merging the event records with data describing the programming delivered over the media network in order to form event

-44-

timelines, each of which describes the programming selected by a particular subscriber over a discrete time period.

17.   A method according to claim 16 wherein the identifying step comprises the step of correlating each command of interest with a global table comprising identification codes.

18.   A method according to claim 16 further comprising the step of filtering the event timelines in order to classify subscribers' viewing patterns into at least two categories.

19.   A method according to claim 18 wherein the first category comprises programming watched by a subscriber for greater than a selected threshold percent of the total program length.

20.   A system for determining the viewing habits of subscribers to a media delivery network for delivering programming, the system comprising:

a)   a collector for collecting event records describing subscribers' selection and use of programming;

b)   means, coupled to the collector, for communicating event records to

c)   a merge processor for processing the event records to form for a selected subscriber an event timeline describing the programming

delivered to a selected subscriber over a particular time period via the media delivery network;

d) means for storing demographics information about selected groups of subscribers; and

e) wherein the merge processor forms a plurality of event timelines and correlates the demographics information with the event timelines.

21. A system according to claim 20 in which the merge processor applies filtering criteria to the event records to determine the programming watched by a subscriber for greater than a selected percent of the programming.

22. A system according to claim 21 in which the collector is deployed upon a set top box that is associated with a display device for displaying delivered programming.

23. A system according to claim 22 in which the subscriber controls the set top box via a remote device in order to invoke and run a variety of applications and the collector forms event records by:

a) identifying a code that corresponds to a command of interest entered by a selected subscriber; and

b) storing in a buffer, associated with the collector, an event record comprising (1) the code corresponding to the command; and (2) a time stamp.